(a) whether Government are aware that the Thai Naval Forces have arrested four Indian nationals and six Myanmar nationals in the Indian territorial waters near Andaman and Nicobar sea and handed them over to the police in Ranong province of South Thailand; and

(b) if so, the steps taken by Government to get them released?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI RAMAKANT D. KHALAP): (a) Yes, Sir. The nationality of the arrested persons is being ascertained; and

(b) The Government are actively pursuing the matter with the Government of Thailand and the arrested persons are still in Ranong jail. Investigations by the Thai authorities are still underway.

Discrimination against Indians in Recruitment in Gulf Countries

4280. SHRI M.A. BABY: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government are aware of the stringent restrictions and regulations introduced by some Gulf countries in recruiting people of Indian origin for employment in their respective countries; if so, the details thereof; and

(b) the steps being taken or contemplated, to negotiate with those countries the matter of avoidance of discrimination in the recruitment on the basis of religion?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI RAMAKANT D. KHALAP): (a) and (b) Government of India is not aware of any stringent restrictions and regulations introduced by any of the gulf countries directed at recruiting people of Indian origin for employment in their respective countries. Indian citizens constitute largest expetriate groups in most of the gulf countries.

Whenever specific instances of discrimination in the recruitment on the basis of religion in recruiting Indian nationals, are brought to the attention of the government, the matter is taken up with respective governments with a view to bring such practices to an end.

Arms for Insurgents in North-East From Thailand

4281. SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the militant groups in North-East India are getting arms supplies from Thailand;

(b) whether Government have taken up the issue with the Thai Government; and

(c) if so, the Thai response in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI RAMAKANT D. KHALAP): (a) to (c) The Government are aware of the misuse of the territory of Thailand by some insurgent groups operating in the North-East of India. The Government of Thailand have been duly sensitised to our concerns and have been requested to prevent the various insurgent groups from procuring weapons from Thailand. The Government of Thailand have conveyed that they fully share our concerns, and have assured us of their full cooperation in assisting in curbing and containing the activities of undersirable elements on their territory.

Indo-Russian Defence Cooperation

4282. DR. MOHAN BABU:
SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Russia has invited India to plan defence cooperation between the two countries beyond the year 2000;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the reaction of Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI RAMAKANT D. KHALAP): (a) to (c) During the visit of the then Prime Minister of India to the Russian Federation from 24-26 March 1997, an understanding was reached to work on a new programme of military-technical cooperation between India and the Russian Federation beyond the year 2000.

NAM Ministerial Conference

4283. SHRI SOLIPETA RAMACHANDRA REDDY:
SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the foreign minister's conference of NAM member countries was held in New Delhi recently;

(b) if so, the details of discussions held and the outcome thereof;

(c) whether non-aligned foreign ministers reached any agreement on the issues like the United Nations reforms, expansion of the Security Council, nuclear disarmament within a time bound framework and enlargement of the non-aligned movement; and

(d) the number of NAM members, who supported a permanent seat for India in the proposed expansion of the Security Council?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI RAMAKANT D. KHALAP): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Conference discussed the prevailing international situation and important political, security, economic, social and environmental issues. It adopted a final Document, Communique on Palestine issue, Declaration on Agenda 21 and Security Council Reform.

(c) and (d) The Foreign Ministers opposed partial or selective expansion of the Security Council to the detriment of developing countries and called for under-representation of NAM countries to be corrected by enlargement of the Security Council. They also called for a phased programme for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons within a specific time-frame. The request of Bosnia & Herzegovina and Costa Rica for membership of the Non-Aligned Movement were referred to the NAM Co-ordinating Bureau for further consideration.

Status of the People of Indian Origin in Fiji

4284. SHRI RAMJI LAL: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) the proportion of the people of Indian origin living in Fiji in the total population of the country;

(b) whether Government are awere of the Status of the people of Indian origin living there;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) the details of efforts made so far by the Government of India to get them justice from that Government

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI RAMAKANT D. KHALAP): (a) According to the provisional results of the 1996 census, Fiji's total population of 772, 655 consists of 394,999 ethnic Fijians, 336,579 ethnic Fijian Indians and 41,077 others. People of Indian origin living in Fiji accordingly constitute 43.56 per cent of the total population.

(b) and (c) Under the 1990 Constitution of Fiji, ethnic Fijian Indians can elect only 27 members in the 70-member House of representatives, irrespective of their percentage strength in the total population. The ethnic Fijians, are entitled to elect 37 members of the Houses of representatives. The